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[Written for Watson's Art Journal.]

THE RIVER.

From the Swedish of Bishop Tegner.

BY CHARLES H. BERTRAM.

Born of the clouds, in this sequestered spot
A heavenly infant into being springs;
See! how he nestles in his mountain cot
And waits the nurture which his mother
brings.

But growing fast, he moveth restless there,
Achievement's fame he dreams already
won;
Upon his heaving breast the moon he'd bear,
And catch the reflex of the setting sun.

'Neath branching firs, he can no longer rest,
Through pebbly vales he fain would wind
his way;
Within these mountain walls no more com-
prest
From rock to rock he leaps, and bounds
away!

"Come on! come on!" each brooklet thus he
hails,
"Here burns the sun! and thirsty sands
await.
Come brothers, come! through gladden'd
fields and dales
I lead you onward to our Father's gate."

The rain-drops hear the rash advent'rous
boy;
With rattling din they patter downward,
too;
His glist'ring bosom proudly swells with joy;
And rocks and trees his conqu'ring path
bestrew.

How gallantly he steps upon the plain!
His dark blue host, all joyfully deservy;
Parch'd, drooping fields uprouse to life again;
His name he gives the lands, and marches
by.

Now Poets' songs are tuned to sing his fame;
And ships and men unnumber'd crowd
around;
The richest cities his assistance claim;
And fertile, flow'ry meads his knees sur-
round.

For none he lingers; on, he hastens fast;
By gilded towers and fruitful fields he hies;
Forever travels, till, when all is past
His Father greets him—and at once he
dies!

GEROME'S "CRUCIFIXION."

A writer in the *Round Table* thus describes this remarkable picture:

A few days before the Christmas just past it was our fortunate lot to spend an hour in the studio of Gérôme, probably the best known among those great painters of France of to-day who have given her—for a time at least, and save in landscape—incontestable pre-eminence over all the European schools. There, finished and framed, but as yet shrouded from the public eye, we saw his latest work fresh from his hand—a work that will add not a little to the exalted reputation he has achieved. When, while we are mounting the stairs that lead to the studio, the subject of this picture was named, we must own that a

momentary feeling of annoyance came across us, on the supposition that Gérôme had been measuring his strength with the greatest of his predecessors, and that he must therefore of necessity have failed, inasmuch as, so far, it has not been given to modern genius and skill to compete successfully, on this peculiar ground, with the illustrious masters of some centuries since. "The Crucifixion! What a theme for a Frenchman!" was our involuntary thought, as *Phrynes Unveiled*, and *Arab Prisoners*, and *Dancing Almehs*, and *Nubian Butchers*, and *Roman Arenas*, and *Assassinated Cæsars*, and *Masquerading Duellists*, and *Courtiers of the Grand Monarque* flitted rapidly before an eye that had dwelt upon these marvels of their kind a hundred times, during successive months, at the Paris Universal Exposition. But all nervousness on this point might have been spared. There was no need to go back to Rubens or Titian, or the rest; no aptness in the recurrence to our mind of other and more material subjects treated by the living artist himself. This "Crucifixion" is unique, and challenges no comparison with others. In it is no cross, with its superscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." There is no parting of garments; no offering of vinegar upon hyssop; no thrusting of unholy spear into the side of our holy Lord. There is in fact no Christ; and there is therefore no attempt to portray that blending of the human and the divine in the dead or dying Saviour, which even the grand old masters, in the plenitude of their power and the earnestness of their devotion, could but feebly approach. Neither are there any spectators, on whose countenances might be read or fear, or wonder, or grief, or triumph. The stupendous deed, whereat the earth was wrapped in darkness and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, is not depicted in any fullness whatever of detail. It is suggested rather; but in such manner that the suggestion must inspire awe in the mind of any one who is worthy to look upon it, in any one who is not utterly debased by the materialism of life and the fripperies of our current pictorial illustration. Let us describe briefly how Gérôme has evaded difficulties almost insuperable, and has contrived to imbue a novel conception with a solemnity not often reached by means more obviously direct. The canvas, if we remember rightly, is somewhat larger than that which he has used in his more celebrated works, though still coming within the designation of cabinet size. The foreground, carried far upward on the plane, is luminous with a preternatural light; but over it—wherein lies the originality of the treatment—are projected from right to left the shadows of three crosses with the figures crucified thereon. The eye recognizes at a glance their awful meaning, for well may it be supposed that he who imagined such a rendering of such a scene knew precisely how much to define and how much to leave untold. In the background—clearly made out according to the research of archæologists brought to bear upon the records that have come down to us from contemporaneous authority—looms up Jerusalem, with its lofty walls and infrequent portals. In the middle distance, winding in long procession and by narrow pathways through the hills that lie toward Calvary, the Roman cohorts and the populace are seen returning to the city, passing into it indeed through one of the gates. Here a banner or an ensign is displayed, there a horse or a camel lifts itself above the

crowd; but all are in reduced proportions, though affording opportunity for some relief in form and color. Lastly, over the city itself hangs a lurid cloud, in strong contrast with the lightly tinted foreground; and in the midst of it the blood-red sun is dimly visible.

Thus it is that Gérôme has handled a subject which might well seem to have been exhausted, and from which many able artists of this generation shrink—and not wisely—under the conviction that it is beyond their power to do it justice or clothe it with interest. Wherein, then, consists the impressiveness of this version, seeing that so little is set down palpably upon the canvas, and that the beholder, in order to feel its influence, must have his own sympathies so largely drawn upon? We can only answer for its effect upon ourselves, for we had not the advantage of the painter's presence or explanation. Gérôme, in this instance, has but shown the same subtlety that characterizes his principal works. Whatever he presents is sure to have abundant merit in its technicalities—in the drawing, the tints, the grouping, the lights and shades, the due subordination of accessories to principals. But, underlying all this, every finished composition from his easel has the far rarer merit of suggestiveness; nor have we any hesitation in asserting that he possesses and displays more of this fine quality than any among his peers, nay, than all of them put together, inasmuch as he touches many chords. Whoever, in studying some of his famous works above hinted, has not been led to read therein respectively the sensuality and grinding despotism of the East, the brutality of ancient Roman, and the hollowness of modern French, civilization—in short, to recognize his pictures as types—has missed no slight portion of their charm. As to the remarkable illustration of his genius now under review, he who runs may read its allusions. If the shadows of the three crosses do not translate word by word the story told by the Evangelists, while assuredly they do not challenge a critique upon anatomical correctness, they speak with mysterious solemnity of the very corner-stone of our Christian faith. Romans and Jews all turning their backs upon the mount of sacrifice, and all wending their way homeward as from an ordinary spectacle—how effective an indication of the indifference of the little world of that day to an event in which they had participated, and which was to tell upon the world at large through time and eternity! What a proud and defiant air is worn by the battle-mended city, as though reckless of the doom pronounced upon her, or ready to scoff at His word who pronounced it! How does the murky atmosphere seem pregnant with impending fate, as though the avenging legions of Titus might be gathering behind its folds! There rules throughout, we say, an inner sense, as contradistinguished from the mere transcript of things and persons. The degree in which this will be felt and appreciated must depend upon the temperament or capacity of the beholder; but we maintain that it does exist in ample measure, and that they who find it out must blame themselves.

We were glad to hear, on the best authority, that there is some chance of this "Crucifixion" being sent to New York. It is well for us to see sometimes that the labored mechanism of Meissonnier's figures, and the smooth realism of Willems' satin gowns, do not constitute all that is high in art.